General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 February 2002

Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 119 (*a*)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/56/583/Add.1)*]

56/144. International Covenants on Human Rights

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 54/157 of 17 December 1999 and 55/90 of 4 December 2000 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/67 of 26 April 2000,[1]

Mindful that the International Covenants on Human Rights[2] constitute the first all-embracing and legally binding international treaties in the field of human rights and, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[3] form the core of the International Bill of Human Rights,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General[4] on the status of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[2] the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights[2] and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[5]

Recalling the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and reaffirming that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and that the promotion and protection of one category of rights should never exempt or excuse States from the promotion and protection of the other rights,

Recognizing the important role of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in examining the progress made by States parties in fulfilling the obligations undertaken in the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in providing recommendations to States parties on their implementation,

---

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2000, Supplement No. 3* and corrigendum (E/2000/23 and Corr.1), chap. II, sect. A.

[2] Resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[3] Resolution 217 A (III).

[4] A/56/178.

[5] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex, and resolution 44/128, annex.

Considering that the effective functioning of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is indispensable for the full and effective implementation of the International Covenants on Human Rights,

Recognizing the importance of regional human rights instruments and monitoring mechanisms in complementing the universal system of promotion and protection of human rights,

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of the International Covenants on Human Rights[2] as major components of international efforts to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

2. *Welcomes* the initiative of the Secretary-General at the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations to invite heads of State and Government to sign, ratify or accede to the International Covenants on Human Rights, and expresses its appreciation to those States that have done so;

3. *Strongly appeals* to all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights[2] and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[2] as well as to accede to the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights[3] and to make the declaration provided for in article 41 of the Covenant;

4. *Invites* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to intensify systematic efforts to encourage States to become parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights and, through the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights, to assist such States, at their request, in ratifying or acceding to the Covenants and to the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with a view to achieving universal adherence;

5. *Emphasizes* the importance of the strictest compliance by States parties with their obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and, where applicable, the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

6. *Stresses* the importance of avoiding the erosion of human rights by derogation, and underlines the necessity of strict observance of the agreed conditions and procedures for derogation under article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, bearing in mind the need for States parties to provide the fullest possible information during states of emergency so that the justification for the appropriateness of measures taken in those circumstances can be assessed, and in this regard takes note of General Comment No. 29 adopted by the Human Rights Committee;[4]

7. *Encourages* States parties to consider limiting the extent of any reservations that they lodge to the International Covenants on Human Rights, to formulate any reservations as precisely and narrowly as possible and to ensure that no reservation is incompatible with the object and purpose of the relevant treaty;

8. *Also encourages* States parties to review regularly any reservations made in respect of the provisions of the International Covenants on Human Rights and the

---

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/56/40), vol. I, annex VI.

Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with a view to withdrawing them;

9. *Takes note with appreciation* of the annual reports of the Human Rights Committee submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth[7] and fifty-sixth[8] sessions, and takes note of General Comments Nos. 27,[9] 28[10] and 29[6] adopted by the Committee;

10. *Welcomes* the reports of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on its twentieth and twenty-first sessions[11] and on its twenty-second, twenty-third and twenty-fourth sessions,[12] and takes note of General Comments Nos. 11,[13] 12,[14] 13[15] and 14[16] adopted by the Committee;

11. *Urges* States parties to fulfil in good time such reporting obligations under the International Covenants on Human Rights as may be requested and to make use in their reports of gender-disaggregated data, and stresses the importance of taking fully into account a gender perspective in the implementation of the Covenants at the national level, including in the national reports of States parties and in the work of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

12. *Calls upon* States parties that have not yet submitted core documents[17] to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to do so, and invites all States parties regularly to review and update their core documents;

13. *Urges* States parties to take duly into account, in implementing the provisions of the International Covenants on Human Rights, the recommendations and observations made during the consideration of their reports by the Human Rights Committee and by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the views adopted by the Human Rights Committee under the first Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

14. *Invites* States parties to give particular attention to the dissemination at the national level of their reports submitted to the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the summary records relating to the examination of those reports by the Committees and the recommendations and observations made by the Committees after the examination of those reports;

15. *Urges* all States to publish the texts of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil

---

[7] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/55/40).

[8] Ibid., *Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/56/40).

[9] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 40* (A/55/40), vol. I, annex VI A.

[10] Ibid., annex VI B.

[11] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2000, Supplement No. 2* and corrigendum (E/2000/22 and Corr.1).

[12] Ibid., *2001, Supplement No. 2* (E/2001/22).

[13] Ibid., *2000, Supplement No. 2* and corrigendum (E/2000/22 and Corr.1), annex IV.

[14] Ibid., annex V.

[15] Ibid., annex VI.

[16] Ibid., *2001, Supplement No. 2* (E/2001/22), annex IV.

[17] See HRI/CORE/1 and addenda.

and Political Rights in as many local languages as possible and to distribute them and make them known as widely as possible in their territories,

16. *Urges* each State party to translate, publish and make widely available in its territory by appropriate means the full text of the concluding observations on its reports to the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

17. *Reiterates* that States parties should take into account, in their nomination of members to the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, that the Committees shall be composed of persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights, consideration being given to the usefulness of the participation of some persons having legal experience, and that members serve in their personal capacity, and also reiterates that, in the elections of the Committees, consideration shall be given to equitable geographical distribution of membership and to the representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems,

18. *Invites* the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, when considering the reports of States parties, to continue to identify specific needs that might be addressed by United Nations departments, funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, including through the advisory services and technical assistance programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,

19. *Stresses* the need for improved coordination among relevant United Nations mechanisms and bodies in supporting States parties, upon their request, in implementing the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and encourages continued efforts in this direction,

20. *Takes note* of the adoption by the Human Rights Committee of its revised rules of procedure,[9] and welcomes the efforts of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights regularly to review their working methods in order to increase their efficiency and effectiveness,

21. *Welcomes* the meeting between the Human Rights Committee and States parties, held on 30 October 2000, to exchange ideas on how to render the working methods of the Committee more efficient, expresses appreciation for the decision of the Committee to organize similar consultations in 2002, and encourages all States parties to continue to contribute to the dialogue with practical and concrete proposals and ideas on ways to improve the effective functioning of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

22. *Also welcomes* the continuing efforts of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to strive for uniform standards in the implementation of the provisions of the International Covenants on Human Rights, and appeals to other bodies dealing with similar human rights questions to respect those uniform standards, as expressed in the general comments of the Committees,

23. *Stresses* the need for further efforts towards developing indicators and benchmarks to measure progress in the national implementation by States parties of

---

[9] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 40 (A/56/40), vol. I, annex III B.*

the rights protected by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

24. *Welcomes* Economic and Social Council decision 2001/220 of 4 June 2001, in which the Council authorized the appointment by the Commission on Human Rights of an independent expert to examine the question of a draft optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and invites the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to consider contributing to the work of the independent expert;

25. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to continue to assist States parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights in the preparation of their reports, including by convening seminars or workshops at the national level for the training of government officials engaged in the preparation of such reports and by exploring other possibilities available under the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights;

26. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights effectively assists the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the implementation of their respective mandates by providing, inter alia, adequate Secretariat staff resources and conference and other relevant support services;

27. *Decides* to endorse the request by the Human Rights Committee to hold an additional week of meetings at Geneva in 2002 in order to reduce further the existing backlog;

28. *Welcomes* the initiative of the Secretary-General, taking into account the suggestions of the Human Rights Committee, to take determined steps, in particular through the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, to give more publicity to the work of that Committee and, similarly, to the work of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

29. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, under the item entitled "Human rights questions", a report on the status of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including all reservations and declarations.

88th plenary meeting
19 December 2001